

OLAND AS A
GEOGRAPHICAL
ENTITY

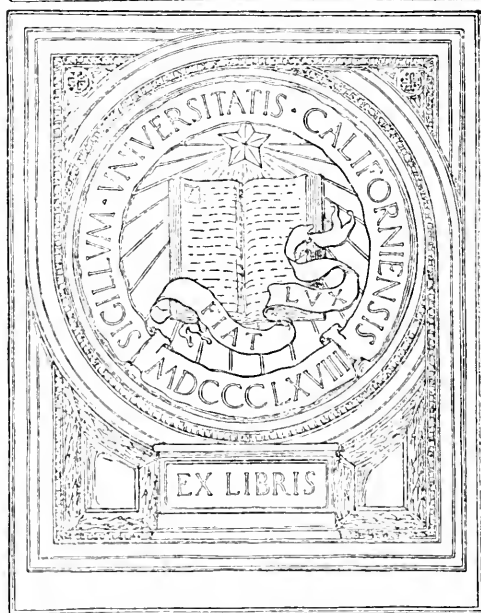
W. NALKOWSKI



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**POLAND AS A GEOGRAPHICAL
ENTITY**

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POLAND AS A GEOGRAPHICAL ENTITY

By W. NALKOWSKI

WITH A PREFACE BY

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PREFACE

DIFFERENT races of men have different characteristics, which allow us to distinguish one race from another. One race has straight hair, another has curled hair; one has a broad head, another has a long head; one has blue eyes, another black. We may class men according to their physical characteristics. We may go farther and differentiate individual men according to their differences. No two men, even of the same race, are exactly alike. By making an inventory of their physical characteristics every man might be differentiated from every other.

A somewhat similar method has been applied to geographical regions. These have been studied and classified. Certain similarities have been found. This, that, and the other are mountainous and rainy; other regions are flat and dry. They obviously fall into different groups corresponding, we may say, to the different races of men. Regions have also been studied and analysed. An inventory has been made of their characteristics so that the points in which they differ from other regions may be noted. No one region is exactly like another, any more than one man is exactly like another.

But, after all, this procedure, though necessary, is rather mechanical. There is something more that distinguishes individual men than the colour of the eyes and the shape of the nose. Even when we have made an inventory of every slightest detail we have not got the whole man, nor perhaps the most important part of him. A man is not the mathematical sum of his parts. There is something else—personality, character, or whatever you please to call it—which shines through the physical characteristics and transfigures them. Two men might conceivably be identical physically, and yet be very different. It is quite true that a certain type of mind goes with a certain type of body. It is probable that a neolithic type of mind will be found with a neolithic type of body, but this does not mean that the mind is entirely subservient to the body. Quite the reverse: because it is of such account it tends to dominate the body. It unifies the characteristics. In the carriage of the body, in the look of the eye, in the grip of the hand, we see a man of a particular kind, and he is of that particular kind, not because of the colour of his eyes and the size of his hand, but because of the something which is the man himself, the something which would still transfigure him were he to lose his hand or eye, which, indeed, might attain fuller development because of the loss. If we omit to take account of this something we make a grievous mistake.

In the case of geographical regions we may make

a mistake which, though it may perhaps be of a different order, is yet of the same kind. We may make an inventory of their characteristics down to the minutest details and yet miss the essential geography. We may miss what the late Professor Herbertson called the *genius loci*. We do not disparage the scientific investigation of all geographical matters. We welcome all such investigation, but we do insist on the supreme importance of the *genius loci* which transfigures the scientific realities and which really gives them a unity. "What is this *genius loci*, and how is it to be discovered?" it may be asked. How does one discover the character of a man? Certainly not with the same instruments by which you measure his body. How does one know a good picture? How does one evaluate anything which requires the artistic sense? "Intuition," says the author of the following pamphlet, and it is as good an answer as one need give. There will be different opinions as to a man's character or the quality of the picture. They will each be judged differently by different people. This does not mean that the man has not a character, but merely that the judges are not omniscient. So when different men see the *genius loci* differently, it does not mean that it is really different, but only that it seems so. It may, indeed, be many-sided, and, to change the metaphor, each man may see only one facet of the diamond.

In the following pages M. Nalkowski discusses Poland. The particular *genius loci* which he sees he

calls "transitionality." Poland lies between other regions, it has characteristics intermediate between them. As he points out, every region is a transitional region. This need not disturb us. Every man has some degree of bravery; the man whom we call brave is he who is supremely brave. Poland is transitional in a more particular sense than most, perhaps nearly all, regions are transitional. It blends the characteristics of the regions between which it lies. Taking this idea as his guide in the first instance, M. Nalkowski shows how the characteristics of Poland acquire additional significance. Not only is their relationship but the very facts themselves are transfigured. They are still the same facts, but they are no longer dry, scientific facts; they are no longer museum specimens kept in separate cases, but they are seen to be part of one body, the medium of the spirit and from which the spirit shines.

Perhaps it may seem that M. Nalkowski rather takes for granted that Poland is a region. He treats the question rather more slightly than is desirable, especially in view of the form which the pamphlet takes; but this, at least, may be said—that to a Pole writing in Poland it must seem almost as ridiculous to discuss at length the claims of his native land to rank as a country, as it would for a man to adduce ponderous arguments to prove that he existed.

JAMES FAIRGRIEVE.

FOREWORD

THE original Polish edition of this work, which was published for the first time in 1912 in Warsaw by the Nalkowski Memorial Committee of the Polish Society for Popularizing Knowledge of Geography and Ethnography of the Country (*Polskie Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze*), contained the following Foreword of that Committee:—

“A premature death cut short the scientific labours of Waclaw Nalkowski on January 29, 1911, at the very time when his achievements had reached their culminating point.

“He continued these labours with the greatest zeal up to the last day of his life, and the treatise entitled ‘The Territories of Historic Poland as a Distinct Geographical Entity’ was one of his latest works.

“The Committee which was formed after the death of Waclaw Nalkowski, for the purpose of publishing his geographical writings, has selected this particular treatise as the first of the series because it gives a general survey of the geography of Poland and can well serve as an introduction to studies on the subject.

“As the Committee desires to acquaint the learned circles of Europe with the person of Nalkowski, hoping at the same time to awake an interest in the territories described in his essay, it is taking steps to have the work published in one of the French geographic periodicals.”

The Polish Information Committee, in publishing an English translation of this work, believe that scholars and general readers in the English-speaking countries will not fail to grasp the significance of the suggestive theses developed by the author.

THE POLISH INFORMATION COMMITTEE.

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Poland as a Geographical Entity

OUR intention in the present essay is to give a geographical synthesis of the Polish territories. We shall try to bring together the *disjecta membra* into which by a catastrophe our country has been partitioned, and to unite them in one harmonious whole, with a certain underlying idea framed by the natural features illustrated by the history of our nation.

In carrying out this task we do not intend to be influenced in any way by patriotic feelings; we shall permit these to act only as an impulse, not as a guide. We do not wish to base our investigations on an *a priori* theory of historic territorialism, but to raise a purely scientific problem in geography, to define Poland geographically, to show what are the natural features of Poland, those which give Poland its individuality. And, finally, we shall consider how geographical factors have influenced Poland's history and the character of its inhabitants.

I

“TRANSITIONALITY” BETWEEN EAST AND WEST AS
AN OUTSTANDING FEATURE OF POLAND.

It is a well-known fact that the subject-matter of geography is considered according to its spacial

grouping—that is to say, according to certain more or less exactly delimited areas representing geographical individualities or countries. In geography the idea of a country is closely connected with the idea of borders. In the course of time and with the development of the science of geography, this conception underwent certain changes, improved itself, and became more and more scientific. Formerly, the idea of a country, was a political conception, so that the geographer's task was easy. He found the geographical divisions ready-made and precisely marked. There was no doubt about the limits of a country. But those divisions were artificial and not based on natural conditions; very often they were in opposition to them; in consequence it was very difficult to define the geographical characteristics of a country. Moreover, political divisions were continually changing. This was especially so during the Napoleonic wars. At that time the ideas of the geographers as to the question of the borders of a country resembled the feeling of giddiness caused by the revolving windmill. As a result an impulse was given to the theory of natural divisions in geography.

It was Karl Ritter who originated this modern systematic geography. The object of the science, according to this theory, was to find natural boundaries, such as seas, mountains, or, at least, rivers. But after some time geographers came to the conclusion that in geographical divisions the most important thing was not to find the boundary

but to define the distinct characteristics of a certain area which differentiated it from neighbouring areas. As to the boundaries, they could be deduced from these same characteristics *a posteriori* and might be loosely defined. It should be acknowledged that the determination of geographical divisions according to this view gives rise in practice to great difficulties and favours the establishment of subjective differences of opinion among investigators. For this reason it must be admitted that in many instances only a reference to such concrete things as mountains, seas, and rivers, or what are termed "natural boundaries," can supply the decisive argument in a discussion as to the question of the frontiers of any one area. And yet, as a matter of fact, it is not the boundary but the characteristic features of the area which should be considered. This is obviously the case when the areas under consideration have no precise physical boundaries. Consequently to find geographical divisions two methods may be used.

1. We may use the inductive method, which implies the discovery of the geographical divisions of a large area—for instance, those of a continent—according to well-known physico-geographical categories. Using this method, we shall get a certain number of morphological, geological, climatic, and other geographical divisions whose respective limits will not coincide exactly. We shall be compelled to combine them afterwards and arrive at a solution by compromise, until finally we get the geographical

areas required, or what are called the regions. Such a method was used a few years ago by Professor Passarge, of Breslau University, for the division of Africa.¹

2. But we can use also the deductive, or I may say the psychological method—i.e. a method similar to that which was used by Taine for the study of the individuality of genius. In this method the object is to discover by intuition, so to speak, what is the main feature of the country, what is its *qualité maitresse* with which the other features are intimately connected, on which they depend, from which the others follow; in a word, we must find a feature representing the *leitmotiv* in all the *categories* of the geographical phenomena of the individuality of a given country. When such a feature has been found, it becomes necessary to test it in the light of facts. To find such a main feature is most important from the theoretical as well as from the practical point of view. It is very important theoretically because it allows us to deduce from one principle the whole variety of the geographical phenomena of the given country, and this is precisely the ultimate object of the science. It is also important practically because the ascertainment of the individuality of a given area gives to this area its *raison d'être* as a distinct geographical entity. It is this second method which we shall adopt here.

This requisite outstanding feature I have found

¹ Petermann's *Mitteilungen*, 1909.

in the quality of "transitionality," mainly between east and west, from the standpoint of communication as well as from that of classification of phenomena. Poland is a country which (1) represents an open door between Western and Eastern Europe—that is to say, it is a passage-land, like the Dzungaria. (2) It is a country in which the characteristics of Western Europe gradually mingle with those of Eastern Europe. It is in Poland that we find the western or eastern boundaries, where they meet, struggle, and combine. The result of this admixture is not mechanical, but, so to speak, physiological. It is the reciprocal action of these different influences which gives a distinct colour to all life, considered from the point of view both of history and geography.

The above opinion was expressed by me a long time ago, nearly a quarter of a century.¹ The controversy already has its history. At first, as is frequently the case, there was adverse criticism, especially from one of the Galician geographers of the old school, Professor A. Rehman.²

To prove my point I must put forward positive arguments founded on logic and facts. In the present case it is necessary to prove that a transitional condition is a characteristic feature of all organs and functions of this geographical organism

¹ Nalkowski, *Geograficzny rzut oka na dawna Polskę*, 1883; also *Słownik Geograficzny*: "Polska."

² A. Rehman, *Ziemia dawnej Polski*, vol. i.

which we call Poland ; in other words, that the characteristics of transition are seen with regard to Poland in all categories of her geographical phenomena—namely, in position, in vertical and horizontal sections, in internal structure, in hydrographic and climatic conditions, in flora and fauna, and, finally, in man and in his history.

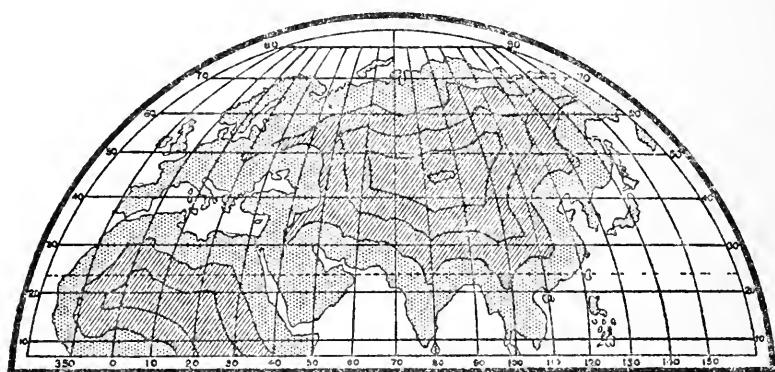
Position.—Let us begin with the question of position. Properly speaking, every position, viewed geometrically, is transitional because through every point you can draw lines in different directions. But if we take a point in a diagram—and every piece of territory is merely a diagram—we see at once that a place may be a transition-point in a greater or less degree. The central point is more a point of transition in comparison with the points lying on the borders of such a figure, and the position of Poland is precisely a central one. It lies in the centre, between the most northerly and most southerly points of Europe, midway between the North Cape and Crete and nearly midway between the westerly point of Ireland and the most easterly point of the Ural Mountains. As regards Ireland and the Urals, it lies, not exactly in the middle but a little nearer the west. This central position of Poland in Europe is illustrated by the fact that the cartographer Hammer proposed, for the map of Europe, to take a globe sector with a central point at Warsaw.¹

¹ See *Geographisches Jahrbuch*, xiv. 1890 (First Part), p. 190.

The central position of a country may be considered from another point of view—namely, with reference to its distance from the sea. We may consider the fact that it has the position farthest from the sea in the continent in which it is situated. In the case of islands such a position coincides with the geographical centre. But Europe is not an island. On the east it is joined to the continent of Asia, consequently in Europe the country farthest from the sea is not necessarily the central district of Europe. But a more detailed analysis will show that even in this respect Poland has a central position, and that this position is to a certain extent transitional. The so-called Rohrbach “equidistant lines”—i.e. lines of equal distance from the sea—show the position of a given area in respect to the sea, the degree of its inland or maritime character.

The map on p. 20 shows that Asia is more continental in character: only Asia has an area (in Mongolia) with an “equidistant” of 2,400 kilometres. The area included in the next equidistant represents 1,800 kilometres, and is still exclusively Asiatic. It is not until we come to the area included in the equidistant of 1,200 kilometres that we find it entering Eastern Europe in the neighbourhood of Kazan. The area of the equidistant of 600 kilometres, which is considered as a frontier between an inland and a maritime country, reaches Poland. Moreover, it juts into the interior of Poland, forming a

triangular-shaped island. This can be more plainly shown on a map of Europe. From the map below it may be easily realized that on its eastern frontiers near the middle of the Dnieper, Poland touches the continental Asiatic equidistant and that, near Lwow and the upper reaches of the Dniester, Poland contains this triangular area (reaching the neighbouring Hungary), which on a map looks like



MAP OF THE EQUIDISTANTS OF EUROPE-ASIA.

Showing the triangular-shaped Polish island formed by the 600 kilometres equidistant.

a drop thrown off from the larger area. We may say, therefore, that Poland has a central position, not only geometrically speaking, as we have shown above, but also in a certain degree with respect to its distance from the coast, and we may also say that this central position is at the same time transitional—between the Western European maritime and the Eastern European continental character.

But the transitional character of Poland will

be shown more strikingly when we consider it, not geometrically but geographically—that is to say, concretely. In certain cases with regard to communications, though geometrically we might expect to see the characteristics of a transitional country, in reality these may not occur, if the geographical conditions are unfavourable (deserts, marshes, or insurmountable mountains) or when the uniformity of the natural products of the neighbouring countries gives no impulse to exchange and consequently to communications. In the case of Poland, however, the contrary is true. Not only may communication here be established very easily—we will deal with this later—but Poland lies between two areas which differ in regard to both material well-being and to culture; between them there exists a strong impulse for exchange, similar to the tendency towards exchange of air under different pressures which gives rise to currents of air. The force of these currents is, as we know, measured by differences of pressure per unit of distance—that is to say, by gradients. If this meteorological term may be used with respect to differences in civilization, then we may say that Poland, lying between different civilizations, of north and south, as well as east and west, is at the cross-roads of cultural gradients, a fact which implies a large amount of communication. She lies between what was formerly the poor and at one time greedy Scandinavia and the rich Byzantine south, between the industrial and

highly civilized west and the less advanced east, with its raw products and its backward industries.

It is chiefly these differences which have determined the movements from west to east for both military and commercial purposes, since on this route there were no physical hindrances (mountains, seas, etc.). This fact makes Poland, in contrast to France, a country of marches and battles, and of the journeying of traders. These conditions were mainly responsible for migrations of Normans from Scandinavia to Byzantium through the eastern part of ancient Poland. A circumstance which has greatly favoured the establishment of commercial intercourse between north and south was the fact that the amber found on the shores of the Baltic was used in Mediterranean countries as an ornament. It was an important object of trade between north and south: on the eastern part of our area by the Black Sea Gate (the Greek Road), as well as on the western part through the Moravian Gate (the Roman Road). To-day amber has lost much of its value: the Byzantine south has declined and the Scandinavian north has progressed in civilization, consequently this current has weakened in intensity. Another cause which has contributed to this result is the fact that the development of navigation has rendered intercourse easy between Northern and Southern Europe through Gibraltar. Moreover, this north-south gradient was weakened, even in early times, in spite of strong

contrasts, owing to the great distance between Scandinavia and Greece. The traffic between west and east, on the contrary, has continued, making Poland a highway for transit trade and turning it into the battlefield of conflicting races (*Deutsch-russisches Kriegsschauplatz*).

The transitional character of Poland is further shown in the fact that it lies in the "communication delta" which spreads in an eastern direction. The importance of this delta is emphasized by the existence of the Warsaw fortifications and those of Brest-Litowski and Kowno.

Horizontal Structure.—We will now examine how the character of transitionality is shown in the horizontal structure. In this respect Europe is composed of two parts—an eastern part, which is rectangular, massive, continental, fused with the continent of Asia, and a western part which is a triangular peninsula, divided into individual portions, specialized, European *par excellence*. The line which divides these two parts runs from the mouth of the Niemen to the Baltic along the eastern part of the Carpathian arc down to the mouth of the Danube on the Black Sea. Poland lies on both sides of this line. The part lying to the west is narrower; it extends from the Carpathian Mountains to the Baltic Sea and is Western European. The part lying to the east of this line, extending from the Baltic to the Black Sea, is Eastern European. The transition from a peninsular to a continental character may be ex-

pressed graphically with the help of equidistants, as we have seen above. Poland as a land of transition between peninsular and continental Europe bears the same relation to the first as the Plain of Lombardy does to the Apennine Peninsula, as Hindustan to the Deccan, and as the valley of the River Yalu to Korea. All these districts represent natural and continual battlefields on which have been decided the fate of their respective peninsulas. This fact made of Poland, so to speak, a guardian of Western European civilization against the Eastern Asiatic barbarians. It is true that this position at the base of the Western European peninsula is shared by Poland with another land, the neighbouring country of Hungary. But Hungary is closed in by mountains and is not a land of transition; it could not, therefore, have played in history the rôle that was played by Poland; for if it had not been for the Iron Gates of the Danube, it would never have played the part of a transitional area. The Magyars have been enclosed in their country like fish in a net. The Turk was one day at the walls of Vienna, but never farther, and—this is characteristic—it was the Poles who confronted him as natural defenders of the peninsula of Europe.

The same position of Poland at the base of the European peninsula also determines, though in a less degree, the communications from north to south, because the eastern part of Poland enjoys

a position with respect to communications like that of an isthmus connecting a long peninsula with a continent. With the object of avoiding the circuitous route by sea, there would be a tendency to use this narrow eastern gradient of communication, and such a tendency has often determined the construction of canals. Here, owing to the fact that the base between the Baltic and the Black Seas is very broad, this tendency is weak. To a certain degree it is encouraged by the presence of the Rivers Dwina and Dniester, but their navigation is obstructed by islands. At a time when navigation by sea was in a backward state, and when in consequence the circuitous sea route was very difficult, the pseudo-isthmian position of the eastern part of Poland had a certain importance, especially in view of the contrast between north and south and the value of amber, of which we have spoken. To-day this significance has disappeared, but there is a prospect of its becoming prominent again when the project of rendering navigable the Dwina and Dnieper by the construction of a series of canals deep enough to admit ocean-going vessels will be carried out.

Let us now consider Poland from the geomorphological point of view. In the western part of Poland there are frontier mountains (the Sudetes), the termination of the block mountains of Western Central Europe, as well as the Carpathian fold-mountains, a continuation of the Alps. In the eastern part of Poland there are no mountains, as

in the Eastern European Plain. As to the Polish Plain, its surface is uniform, and this is characteristic of the plains of Western, as well as those of Eastern, Europe. Poland, therefore, stands in the first place as a land of transition with respect to communications. In considering this transitional character with respect to communications, it ought to be pointed out that the plain of Poland in its western part suddenly narrows; the effect of this narrowing intensifies the energy of the current, and thus makes the pulse of civilization beat more quickly. But even from the point of view of geomorphology the plain of Poland is not entirely lacking in transitional characteristics, though these are less striking. They do not concern the relief, but the geology. The difference consists in the fact that in the western part of this plain more ancient folded strata are to be found under the surface, as well as block formations more recent in character. In one place, between the Pilica and the Vistula, these appear externally in a plastic form as the Kielce-Sandomir Mountains, which in type resemble the mountains of Central Germany. Everywhere else older strata have been covered with strata of more recent date—namely, the tertiary and quaternary formations. Quite another structure is found in the eastern part of the Polish Plain. Here there are no dislocations. The strata are almost horizontal, including the primary formation, which rests on foundations of granite and gneiss. Though both

parts of the Polish Plain are the same as to the surface, the same morphologically speaking, they are different with respect to their structure and origin. In the west the plain is *Schollenland* or *Aufüllungsebene*, as in Western Europe: in the east it is a plateau, slightly denuded or *Schichtungsebene*, as in the case of Eastern Europe.

Owing to the dislocation of the strata and the consequent different geological character of the surface, the western part of Poland is richer in ores than the eastern, and this fact has, of course, had an influence on its connection with the west. It is a curious thing that this difference in structure and origin between the two parts of the Polish Plain has a certain relation to the seismic differences. Now, judging by the appearance, there is no difference in this respect between the two parts: they are nearly equally aseismic, but the causes of this aseismicism are different. In the western part the aseismic character appears, notwithstanding the recent tertiary dislocations of the strata, owing to the depth of the soil; in the eastern part the aseismicism is determined by the lack of recent dislocations.¹ We may therefore say that even in this respect Poland is a transitional country.

Surface Stratum.—As to the surface stratum, the two parts of Poland differ slightly, and the area under consideration shows a certain transi-

¹ F. D. Montassus de Ballore, *Les Tremblements de Terre. Géographie séismologique*, 1906, pp. 100, 101.

tional character. The western part is covered with glacial debris, as is the case with the German Plain ; the eastern part, in the south, has a wedge-shaped portion, free from these deposits, but covered with drift like the plain of Eastern Europe.

The Hydrographical Point of View.—If we consider Poland from the hydrographical point of view, we shall see that in the western portion, where the water-parting runs along the southern frontier mountains, the rivers have but one trend, northward, as in the German Plain (the Oder forming part of the Vistula, omitting the San). In the eastern portion, where the water-parting, prolonged from the mountains between the sources of the San and Dniester, runs along the plain, the river trend is twofold—northward and southward, like that of the Eastern European Plain. In this respect also the Vistula has a transitional character. If, as is usually done, we take for its source the springs on Baran Mountain, it is a Western European stream. If, however, we take as the head-stream the San, whose sources are close to those of the Dniester, it is an eastern one ; the course of its right two-armed affluent, the Bug-Narew, corresponding to the Warta-Netze with the Oder and the Havel-Spree with the Elbe, is, unlike them, related in the east, not to one river system but to two, the Niemen and Dniester.

This is, of course, a typical transitionality. On the other hand, from the point of view of communications, the Polish rivers flowing in a

southern direction rather help the passage from north to south, and rather hinder the passage from east to west, except when they are frozen over ; while in the central depression, the region of the Great Plains, the main rivers at times take a latitudinal direction, as, for example, the Upper Niemen and the Middle Vistula. The same is true of several important tributaries—the Pripet, the Lower Bug, together with the Narew and the Lower Warta and Netze, which, together with the canals, form a sufficiently important line of waterway between west and east, corresponding to the Baltic and similar to the Siberian waterway. And in addition to this the parallel strips of dry, higher ground that separate those rivers form practicable traffic roads from west to east, affording facilities for crossings and bridges.

The Hydrological Point of View.—As for hydrological considerations—i.e. the economics of water—the rivers of the eastern portion of our country, like most of the East European rivers, are subject to spring floods, owing to the melting of the snow in the plains : while the Vistula, in addition, like the rivers flowing farther to the west, has summer floods, owing to the melting of the snow at that season and to the rainfall in the mountains.

The Climatic Point of View.—From the climatic point of view the region of Poland forms a land of passage between the oceanic climate of Western Europe and the continental climate of Eastern Europe ; while in the far rugged Scandinavian

north there is found the everlasting granite ridge, like the skeleton of an overturned giant vessel on the grave of a Viking chief, dividing the long, narrow peninsula into two wholly different climatic portions, one maritime, foggy, and gloomy, that of Western Norway, and a continental one in Sweden; while in the far Balkan south the coastal chain of the Dinaric Alps separates Dalmatia, with its Mediterranean conditions, from the Eastern European climate of the eastern portion of the peninsula. Likewise in the south of Poland the continental steppe-like east of Europe extends like a gulf (under the shelter of the Alps and Carpathians) to the Hungarian Plain, nearly to the walls of Vienna, and there breaks suddenly on the steps of the Alpine region of Western Europe. In our region there is no break or dividing wall. Through the gap between the Scandinavian rise and the Carpathians, the southern portion of which is occupied by the Vistula gates, the oceanic influences penetrate and produce a country transitional in climate.

Let us now look more closely at certain climatic elements from the point of view of this transitional character.

The temperature in winter, with us as in almost the whole of Europe, lowers towards the east, but in our region very gradually, as can be seen from the fluctuations there of the January isotherms: over the western portion of our area the isotherm -3° prevails; in the east, round the Dnieper and

Dwina, it is -5° . As in summer the temperature rises to the east, the yearly amplitude rises in the same direction. The mean isotherm 23° , passing from north to south through the neighbourhood of Warsaw, forms, according to Wojejkow, the boundary between the oceanic and continental climates. The lessening of rainfall to the continental east is not so obvious as we should expect; the extensive marshes and woods of Polesie are a disturbing factor, and even induce increased rainfall. It is only to the south-east, in the direction of the steppe, that the rainfall decreases. Just as to the north, near the Baltic, the oceanic climate penetrates farthest to the east, so in the south the continental climate (together with the steppe land) penetrates farthest to the west, ending abruptly on the line of the San, or rather against the western edge of the Podolian plateau. The transitional characteristics manifested by this intrusion of the steppe from the east into our region brought with them also cultural and historical ones: it was the contrast between the nomadic, pastoral inhabitants of the prairie-like south and the husbandmen of the marshy and wooded north which was the main factor in the annals of Eastern Europe—i.e. of Russia. The climatic transitional characteristics find their expression not only in space but in time, notably in climatic fluctuations. This is a consequence of the struggle between the Eastern and Western European climates: in this struggle these climates often extend beyond their boundaries. At

one time we get a mild, oceanic, "English" winter, at another a hard, continental, "Russian" one; at times in summer there are protracted rains, spoiling the haymaking and the harvests, then again protracted droughts, parching the wheat and grass crops. Such variability is injurious to the farmer, often makes his labour vain, and leaves him fatalistic: "All will be as God allows."

Flora and Fauna.—From the point of view of its flora and fauna, Poland, alike in the low country and on the southern frontier mountains, has a transitional character. It is obvious that there must be organisms, partly Western, partly Eastern European, and that for some of them Poland is the eastern frontier, for others the western, and this for two reasons: in the first place, because of its climatic transitional characteristics which condition the life of living beings; in the second, on historic grounds, owing to migration. When, to give a noteworthy instance, the Scandinavian ice-cap, which at the period of its greatest extension came southwards to the slopes of the Sudetes and Western Carpathians, began to recede northwards, then, to the region thus set free from ice, living beings began to migrate, some from the south-west and later from the west, others again from the south-east and later from the east, thus creating a mixed flora and fauna.

In the neighbourhood of the right bank of the Vistula and farther along the eastern foot of the Carpathians runs the western limit of the beech, the

most important vegetation-boundary between west and east; this boundary runs pretty uniformly with the January isotherm—viz. -4° . The same may be said of the fauna; e.g. certain snails which cannot stand a dry climate find their eastern limit here; on the other hand, certain animals that like a prairie climate here find their western limit—e.g. the locust, the bustard, the marmot; the marmot extends farther to the west, finding in the wheat-tracts a sufficient substitute for the steppes. There are other causes for the transitional character of the fauna—e.g. transitionality of culture. Cultivation becomes more intense as one goes west, but it brings with it the cutting down of woods, and the consequent extinction of woodland animals; hence in the eastern portion of our region there still survive certain animals which are already extinct in the western—e.g. wolves. In the second place, as to fish, this transitional character of the fauna finds its foundation in hydrography—namely, in the intrusion into the interior of the eastern portion of Poland of the chief water-parting, which here inclines to the north-east. It divides the piscatorial fauna of the Baltic basin from that of the Black Sea basin. Accordingly, moving from west to east we come upon a boundary of aquatic fauna—e.g. that of the salmon, beyond which extends the habitat of the sturgeon. But owing to the lowness of the water-parting and periodical inter-communication of the headwaters, on either side this boundary is not very sharply marked, and

many fish are common to both basins (e.g. the soudack).¹

The Ethnographical Point of View.—The transitional position of Poland is further illustrated ethnographically. The centre of this region is inhabited by the Polish people; whereas in the outlying parts we meet with great ethnographic varieties. It has been shown that aggregation and the crossing of various racial elements furthers the development of civilization—whether owing to the increased keenness of competition or to the renewal of blood through crossing.

On the west, German racial waves have made their way into this region along the valley of the Upper Oder and Netze, and still more along the coast of the Baltic, penetrating the Polish racial region and isolating certain portions (e.g. the Kashubs); and, in addition, the surf of these waves, in the form of German settlements, has penetrated into the midst of the Polish domain. On the east, again, the Polish tract has split itself into islands scattered throughout the Ruthenian and Lithuanian territories. And as, in the north, German nationality extends along the Baltic far to the east, so in the south along the valley of the Dniester Ruthenian nationality penetrates far to the west, approaching the German ethnographical bay, which extends along the valley of the Upper Oder.

The plentiful sprinkling of Jews in Poland is likewise a result of its transitional state. Owing

¹ See *Pamiętnik fizjograficzny (Physiographic Memoir)*.

to the grave disturbances of war to which Poland as a passage-way has been a prey, an industrial and commercial class was unable to establish itself in the Polish nation, and the gap was filled by Jewish immigration. Even within the limits of the Jewish race itself transition may be traced: in the West we have German Jews, in the East Russian.

Religious Differences.—Racial variations are reflected in religious differences. On the east we have the Greek Church, in the west the Roman Catholic and Protestant, which touches the Greek Church along the Baltic. Religious transitional characteristics find expression in the variations in church architecture. In the west we find Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance; in the east, Byzantine; and the building of church towers with cupolas becomes more marked to the east and south-east.

The Economic and Social Point of View.—Let us now compare the conditions in west and east, considering them from the economic and social point of view. Whereas in the west we still find the commercial and industrial centres typical of Western Europe (e.g. in Upper Silesia—Kielce and Lodz), the more we move east the more exclusively does the raw production (agriculture, cattle-breeding, and forestry) proper to Eastern Europe predominate, the sole exceptions being the coasts of the Baltic and the Carpathian foothills.

This transitional economic nature of Poland

results in a corresponding commercial tendency ; a notable part of the commerce in that region falls, as we have already remarked, to transit trade : export trade has a twofold trend. Part of Western Poland exports the fruits of its industry to the east of Europe and to Asia, and part of Eastern Poland exports raw products (timber, cattle, and stock) to the west.

Side by side with this goes a decrease in density of population, together with an increased birth-rate and lowering of the standard of culture ; this lowering of standard from west to east is so gradual as to escape notice (with the exception of the line of the San, and still more outlying parts of Podolia), but it becomes very marked when we compare western borders with eastern.

There is a striking difference, for example, between a highlander of the Sudetes and Western Carpathians, who has been through a Grammar School, not to say a University, and one of the Eastern Carpathians, a Hucul, who no long while since was a bandit of the pattern of the Balkan "hayduck," and to whom even now the unit of measure of distance is "the cast of an axe" ! There is a striking difference between the inhabitant of Silesia, who has been developed under the influence of mining and participates in the economic and mental whirl of the great industry of Western Europe, and the Ukraine agriculturist. There is a striking difference between the Posnanian peasant, practising an improved system of agriculture and

reading the papers, and the poor Polesian, housed in a wretched cottage, superstitious and ignorant. Here we have a series of social contrasts based on the fact that the former examples are representative of the Western, the latter of the Eastern, European type. Only on nearing the Baltic do we find the differences in the level of development between west and east lessening. That sea, impinging from west to east on the mainland of Europe, as it has favoured the extension of the Western European climate far into the east, so it has facilitated the more uniform penetration of western culture: even in the Middle Ages the influence of the Hansa spread as far as Novgorod the Great.

The Black Sea exercised a similar influence on the eastern portion of the south. In conjunction with Mediterranean culture this influence became manifest in remote antiquity, though it was checked in its spread by the belt of the steppe and the rapids of the Dnieper. Moreover, the barbarian wave from the east, the wave of Mohammedanism, swept away that influence there for a long period and wiped out the centre of civilized life.

Political Conditions.—These transitional characteristics may also be noted in the complicated political conditions of Polish territory. At one time they found expression in the formation of two separate States—the Polish in the west and the Lithuanian-Ruthenian in the east, which later became amalgamated. Now after the partition of

Poland we have, in this region, without any geographical reasons, three empires in close touch.

All the above ethnographical, cultural, and political conditions, being the outcome of this intermediate position, naturally bring about various complications—unrest, opposing interests and international violence; hakatism, anti-polonism, anti-semitism; the Ruthenian, Kholm, Jewish, and Lithuanian questions.

The Polish people living in this transitional country always were, and still are, a prey to a succession of dangers and struggles. They should be ever alert and courageous, remembering that on such a transitional plain, devoid of strategic frontiers, racial boundaries are marked only by the energy and civilization of the people. If they are strong they advance those frontiers by pushing forward; by weakening and giving way they promote their contraction. So the mainland may thrust out arms into the sea, or being weak, may be breached and even overwhelmed by the ocean floods.

II

“MERIDIONAL SYMMETRY” AS ANOTHER OUTSTANDING
GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURE OF POLAND.

Meridional Symmetry.—To complete our estimate of Poland as a geographical entity it is proper to add that our country possesses still another feature

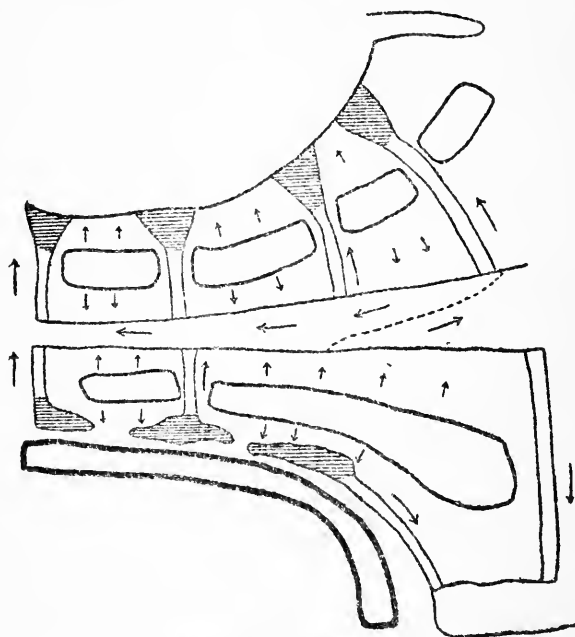
—namely, meridional symmetry. We shall show that even in this feature there is a measure of transitionality.

We call symmetrical points, as is well known, such a pair of points as lie on both sides of a certain line, called the axis of symmetry, on one perpendicular to it, and at equal distance from that axis. The symmetrical lines or figures are drawn diagonally from the point of symmetry, and each point on one line or figure possesses its symmetrical point in the other.

In this particular instance the axis of symmetry will be the central latitudinal depression—i.e. the marshy furrow called the Region of the Great Valleys. It is so called from the fact that the rivers there flow in disproportionately great valleys, a fact which makes them look, to quote Berendt's phrase, "like a mouse in a cage from which a lion has escaped." The first elements of symmetry are the northern and southern frontiers; the first runs in a curve to the north-east, the other in a similar curve to the south-east. Both subsequently pass into the more or less parallel lines of the Gulf of Finland and the Black Sea; so that in the east symmetry is not only geometrical as in the west, but also concrete, since the sea-line on the north has corresponding to it a similar sea-line in the south.

Plastic Symmetry.—Further, there are the following factors of plastic symmetry, to be noted: on both sides of the hollow of the Great Valleys

we encounter to the north the chain of maritime depressions, those of the Baltic (Valleys of the Oder, Vistula, Niemen, and Dwina), and to the south the chain of plains (the Odrian, Vistulan, and Dnjestrian), together with a maritime depression, that of the Black Sea. Further, there are two new plastic factors: to the north the Baltic hill belt



SKETCH MAP OF SYMMETRY.

(the Pojezierze), and to the south the Podgorski foothills (the plateau of Southern Poland).

The plastic symmetry is incomplete: the southern Polish plateau lacks a morphological counterpart (the coastal line of the Baltic is only a geometrical equipoise); morphological symmetry is broken by the intervention of the Baltic, but the symmetry

thus broken reappears beyond in the Scandinavian mountains. Plastic symmetry implies *symmetry of actual geological process*: in the low-lying region of the Great Valleys with its sluggish waters we find *accumulation*—i.e. the deposit of materials; to north and south, the high-lying belts being more elevated and having swiftly flowing waters, erosion—i.e. the carrying down of detritus and the cutting of valleys—is predominant. On the plains at the foot of the mountains and on the sea border we again find accumulations (at the delta).

Hydrographic symmetry is based on the fact that both the elevated belts, northern and southern, are broken through by great rivers, and also by smaller secondary streams flowing more or less along lines of latitude towards or away from the region of the Great Valleys.

Rivers flowing in a latitudinal direction are of but secondary importance; with the exception of tributaries of the Oder, they are generally small and occur in the vicinity of the gaps: they are most frequent in the eastern wider portions of the plateau belts (e.g. the Vilia and Ros). In the eastern portion hydrographic symmetry shows a marked increase. Not only is there correspondence in the occurrence of secondary stream-systems, but in the breaches formed by main streams and in those streams themselves; we have here, as is known, rivers belonging to two basins, so that the symmetry of the gaps is more complete, there being no longer two opposite gaps formed by the same

river flowing to the north, but gaps formed by two separate rivers flowing in opposite directions—the northern river to the north, the southern to the south. Here the symmetry of the gaps is therefore not geometrical, but dynamic. Moreover, the lesser streams of the high-lying belts, with an outward direction, flow in the eastern portion north and south to the sea (Baltic and Black Seas). At the same time, in the western region the exterior northern streams flow to the sea (the Baltic), while the exterior southern make, not for the sea but for the Podgorski Plain. They do not represent separate rivers, but tributaries—e.g. on the right the tributaries of the Oder, and on the left those of the Vistula and Dniester. The latter present a transitional form as compared with the more perfect eastern symmetry, for though they do not as yet flow separately to the sea, yet they belong no longer to the same basin (the Baltic) as the outer northern, but to the Black Sea basin.

A certain symmetry is inherent, though it is not so strongly developed in the latter. The coastal Baltic lakes (*haffs*), separated by spits of land, correspond to the Black Sea *limans*, which are separated by sandbanks; the lakes of ancient glacial formation in Pojezierze correspond to the exactly similar ones in the southern mountains, especially those in the Tatra. These corresponding groups are separated along the axis of symmetry in the region of the Great Valleys by fluvial lakes, for the rivers of these districts, which flow slowly

and make great bends, have a tendency to produce floods, thus lending themselves to the formation of lakes.

Climatic symmetry is also noticeable, though it is not so pronounced; it manifests itself notably in temperature (actual) and in rainfall, both of which are dependent upon hypsometric conditions. Hence, for instance, the region of the Great Valleys, more low-lying, forms a belt which is warmer and dryer, dividing the two high-lying belts, both of which are colder and more rainy. A certain disturbance of symmetry is, however, brought about by the dry prairie-like south-east on the one side, and on the other by Polesia, with its fairly abundant rain (due to the marshes and woods). But that is only the beginning of the new East European symmetry on a great scale: the symmetry of lack of rainfall on the steppes in the south and in the Polar regions to the north divided by a belt of more frequent rainfall.

Climatic symmetry brings with it a certain symmetry of flora, in particular certain plants that require a cold climate (e.g. the red pine is to be found in the southern mountains and in the Baltic plateau). A certain hydrological symmetry is especially noticeable in the swiftness of the mountain streams and those of Pojezierze, which are separated by the sluggish streams of the Great Valleys, the home of leeches; this in its turn has brought about a symmetry of piscatorial fauna, especially the occurrence of trout, in the mountain

streams and uplands of the south, as well as in the rivers of Pojezierze. This symmetric latitudinal system of formation which in a general way manifests itself in belts has also exercised a certain influence on man, producing a certain "zonal" distribution of anthropo-geographical types, independent of ethnographic variety. In this respect it is possible in Poland to distinguish, apart from nationalities, the following anthropo-geographical types:—

The Baltic coast-dwellers, who mostly lived by fishing and collecting amber in the coastal lakes (*haffs*), by seafaring and trading, by securing dunes and draining marshes, came under Scandinavian and Frisian influence. All these occupations, as well as ideological and racial influences (crossing), could not fail to bring about in their customs and character many features which make them in many respects more akin to the Scandinavians from overseas, or indeed to the Dutch, than to their kinsmen of the mainland near at hand.

The "Lakelanders" settled on the shores of lakes—the land being for the most part an unfertile plateau—were also given to fishing. But the fact of their being in lakes, free from storms, and confined within narrow limits, was bound to evoke other psychical characteristics than did the highly dangerous fishing in which the seacoast dwellers were engaged. Moreover, the abundance of lakes has resulted in a highly developed breeding of water-fowl, and the abundance of unfertile land in the breeding of cattle,

horses, and sheep. In addition there is the rearing of bees, made especially easy, owing to the extensive heaths. Forestry is also highly developed.

The People of the Forests.—This term is applied to the denizens of the wooded and marshy tract of the Great Valleys and its southern adjuncts, although to-day, in view of the cutting down of the forests in the western portion of the belt, this designation is appropriate only to the denizens of the eastern portion. Originally they were forest folk *par excellence*, living by hunting and forestry, going about in wooden shoes owing to the marshy soil (this is still done even now in Podlasia and Polesia), seeking out for their settlements the most stable spots among the marshes, battling with the flooding of the rivers that flow sluggishly between low banks, digging channels to drain the marshes, firing the woods, roaming among the trees ("the mountain forest") like the ghostly inhabitants of the mangrove forest, constructing dams of earth and logs through the marshes "like the forest race of beavers, who, too, are marshland dwellers." In proportion as the woods are cleared and the marshes drained, the woodlander becomes more of a farmer. Kujavia in this respect may be looked upon as the antithesis of Polesia.

The Popolanians or Opolanians are the dwellers of the west loess belt. They are settled mainly on the woodless plains, and were in the first place shepherds, but in time became essentially farmers, forced (mainly in the east), unlike the denizens

of the above-mentioned belt, to struggle against a lack of water, and trying to collect sufficient supplies of water in ponds by damming the streams. Like islands amid this agricultural belt, there appear mining communities as a result of the laying bare of older strata due to dislocation, denudation, or erosion (e.g. in Silesia, Kielce, or on the Dnieper).

This agricultural belt in the south-east passes slowly into the Steppe pastoral zone, yet agriculture is met with there too, where it develops at the expense of cattle-breeding. The whole history of the people of that transitional and border zone is the story of the conquests of the plough and sabre over the Steppe and wild nomads. This must naturally have exercised no small influence on the character and structure of the society there (Polish colonization, the development of the Cossack communities, the warlike spirit of the inhabitants, the racial admixture of Tartar and other Eastern elements).

The Highlanders, called in Polish *Pogorzanie* or *Gorale*, who go about in special hard leather sandals because of the stony soil, lead a pastoral, half-nomadic life. Agriculture is but scantily developed, owing to the climate and soil. The natives have to roam looking for work, and they generally take to forestry; they have—owing to the abundance of plastic forms—special capacities as sculptors, and, owing to the dangers and toils of a life in the highlands, they exhibit physical bravery and manliness. The parsimony of Nature and the

lack of shelter in days gone by, produced in them a buccaneering spirit which has degenerated in modern times into greed and a tendency to exploit tourists.

The Coast-dwellers.—Finally, there are the coast-dwellers of the Black Sea, corresponding to those of the Baltic, engaged in fishing and the extraction of salt from the coastal lakes (*limans*). They came under the ideological and ethnographical influence of the people of the Steppes and the Balkans—Tartars, Turks, Greeks, Armenians, and even of the more distant Mediterranean people, the Italians.

In this anthropo-geographical system of zones the same traces of symmetry were manifest at the beginning: in the dawn of history the earliest traces of civilization appeared on the Black Sea littoral, in the form of the Greek colonies, which were later succeeded by the Genoese; while on the Baltic littoral there developed the relatively early civilization of the Pomeranians and eventually of the Hansa. The incursion of the Teutonic Knights along the Baltic and the Lakeland to the east and the invasion of the Tartars along the Black Sea and Steppes westwards brought about two symmetrical politico-ethnical barriers, which shut off the Poles from these seas. The latter destroyed the cultural symmetry by breaking off its southern branch on the Black Sea.

Even in this secondary type of symmetry the main point, the transitional character, is manifested.

Westward, symmetry becomes less marked, and disappears beyond the Elbe ; eastward, the factors of symmetry become more numerous, the symmetry becomes more complete and assumes an East-European character, stretching from sea to sea.

The transitional position between west and east is thus the chief feature of Poland ; it becomes her *qualité maîtresse*, being represented in all the organs and in all the functions of that geographical entity which, like Janus, presents two faces, one turned westward, the other eastward.

Poland not a Border-zone, but an Independent Geographical Unit.—The transitional characteristics apply not only to a part but to the whole of Poland ; in fact, they may be applied to Poland in the broadest sense, to the historical Poland of the Union period as well as to the ethnographical Poland of the Piast dynasty. Poland wishes no conquest, but has no desire to give up her historical territories.

But justice compels one to admit that our definition, the term “country of transitional character,” appears to present a certain weakness, which nevertheless its opponents have not noticed, for in this definition they have attacked only the transitionality ; they have left untouched the other part of the definition—i.e. the “country.” That other part is open to attack, however, and that precisely because its main characteristic, as demonstrated by us, is its elasticity. There arises, in fact, the question whether this region of transi-

tionality is not simply a narrow border-zone between Western and Eastern Europe. Why should we in this particular case exalt an almost universal frontier characteristic into a specific characteristic of a definite country?

This criticism, however, which in the light of the previous analysis of transitionality has already proved to be open to attack, can easily be answered.

Firstly, the so-called transitional "border-zone" is exceptionally broad and well provided with facilities for passage (latitudinal width).

Secondly, it possesses frontiers of corresponding length and clear definition to the north and south, which, lending it a lasting framework, make of it a formation analogous to Moravia, Dzungaria, or the Soudan, which have long been reckoned as countries.

Thirdly, this frontier-zone possesses, so to speak, a nucleus. In Africa, where the form of plains predominates, in regions which are therefore for the most part devoid of definite frontiers, this rôle is played by detached groups of mountains or single mountains, rising up amid a monotonous plain; these, affording man a shelter from his enemy, a strategical support, and often an economic basis, and also acting as condensers of moisture among arid plains, have become focuses of the settled life of races, centres of kingdoms from which dominion was extended forward over the level country round, growing weak in proportion to the distance from the centre. On the

transitional plain of Poland such a centre was not a group of mountains, but the basin and system of a river, notably of the Vistula. That river is transitional between the system of one-branched streams of the rivers in the German West and the two-branched system of the rivers in the Russian East. This Vistula-system has special characteristics which make it such a centre or focal point. It is connected with all the river systems of old Poland with the one exception of the Dwina. The Vistula alone gathers into itself all the types of streams belonging to our region: mountain, forest, lake, and even Steppe waters, the latter in the right tributaries of the San. Further, it differs markedly and advantageously from neighbouring rivers in the composition of its drainage system, especially from those of the west.¹ Whereas the Elbe and Oder are rivers of almost straight courses and, from the point of view of the evolution of the system of tributaries, they are all fed on one side except in their upper courses, the Vistula, adapting itself partly to the longitudinal direction belonging to the plastic symmetry of the country, meanders along its basin and obtains a so-called great development—i.e. a high ratio between its true length and its length in a straight

¹ The eastern rivers—the Niemen and the Dniester—have also noteworthy systems of tributaries, but they are rivers of the plains, not so varied in character, and therefore they also formed at one time historic centres of Lithuania and Ruthenia but were not so important as the Vistula.

line from its sources to its mouth; and from the point of view of tributaries it represents a bi-lateral system with a centripetal direction of its main confluents (as is the case with the Seine). And although this bi-lateral system does not appear wholly uniform, being less developed on the left side, this is only apparently so. Indeed, in the curve of the Middle Vistula, open to the west, flows the Warta, and although a tributary of the Oder, in its northern course this river forms a sector of the Vistula curve as if it were an elder sister of the Pilica; it used to be joined to the Vistula through the Lake of Goplo, and it may in truth be claimed as still belonging to the system of the Vistula. The Warta, as lying farther to the west, and being thus more accessible to civilization than the Middle Vistula, originally played the part of substitute for the more easterly middle part of the main river. Here in the basin of the Warta, round the lake centre of Goplo, in a region chequered like a chess-board by the numerous arms, now latitudinal, now longitudinal, of the marshy rivers which recalled the Danish archipelago and better deserved the name "Ile de Pologne" than the Seine that of "Ile de France," was the focus of a very ancient Sloveno-Polish settlement, the centre of the old Polish State. This centre, with the spread of culture, being too eccentric, shifted farther eastward to the Middle Vistula. The Vistula, flowing through the ethnographical focus of Poland, where historical life beat with quickest pulse, is the

Polish river *par excellence*, just as the Volga is the Russian river and the Rhine the German. So it is of the Vistula that our people sing:—

Visla our own Polish river shall be,
She runs from Carpathians down to the sea.

This crystallizing, focal significance of the basin of the Warta-Vistula takes us finally to the fourth and last factor which raises Poland above the rank of a "border-zone" to that of a transitional country.

In dividing the globe into countries or regions by taking into account various geographical categories we must not neglect man, who alone in many cases gives cultural unity to a country, which lacks homogeneity and definite boundaries. *Hence if we consider that in the crystallizing hydrographic focus of our region or transitional zone a people settled which possessed enough cultural vigour and elasticity to take up the historical part dictated by transitionality and which extended this elastic border-zone, by expanding, partly ethnographically, partly historically and culturally, westward to the vicinity of the Oder and eastward to the parts about the Dwina and Dnieper—if we take this all into consideration, then we must come to the conclusion that Poland is not merely a border-zone, but a transitional country, fitted to serve as the abode of a separate individual nation and to play an important historical rôle. It is precisely owing to*

this transitional nature of our country that the Polish people more than any other nation, with the one exception of the Dutch, form an essential and indispensable factor in the land. This has doubtless found intuitive expression in their national song, which says that their country will exist as long as its people live.

The Question of Poland's Frontier.—Having set forth the main features of our country and established that they suffice to ensure its geographical independence, we may now *a posteriori* concern ourselves with the question of its frontiers. The southern and northern frontiers are, as we have seen, sharply defined by Nature, marked out by mountains and seas, but east and west, since these are directions of transitionality, present a difficulty, as to demarcation of frontiers, and may be called the “directions of elasticity.” Let us try to give an approximate definition of the geographical frontiers of maximum extension. On the west such a maximum may most properly be sought in the greatest narrowing of the plain, between the most northerly spur of the mountain roof of Bohemia—i.e. the north-west branch of the Sudetes, where the Lusatian Neiss emerges, and the most southerly angle of the gulf of the Pomeranian Baltic, where the Oder issues. On the line of this narrowing flows the River Neiss-Oder, closing the passage. Farther westward the Bohemian frontier rampart bends south-west, and the Baltic coast north-west, changing its uniform and traffic-lined nature to one

indented with "boddens" and fjords and sprinkled with islands. On the east we can take as basis the line where the Baltic makes a final attempt to turn the enlarged continental Lithuano-Prussian portion of old Poland into a peninsula by approaching the Black Sea; i.e. you can draw a line from the Riga, or Finland Gulf, to Odessa: along that line flows the Dnieper and Dwina or Dnieper and Wielika Narova with the Peypus.

Thus on the west and east we have rivers as boundaries. And although such frontiers are very imperfect, yet in any case they form a certain line of defence, especially when their valleys are mainly marshy. Their importance was greater in olden times, when the military art of crossing rivers was imperfectly practised. The German Emperor, Frederick Barbarossa, regarded the Oder as a rampart of Poland (*Poloniam sicut murus ambiit*); even to this day the right bank of the Oder is known as Polish, the left as German. Forts on these rivers used to be of primary importance; Frankfort on the Oder and Tavan on the Dnieper are examples.

III

POLISH HISTORY AND POLISH NATIONAL CHARACTER AS THE OUTCOME OF GEOGRAPHICAL CONDITIONS.

The anthropo-geographical aspect, which is so important for the recognition of the geographical independence of our country, and even plays a

certain part in defining its maximum extension to west and east, leads us finally to the highest pinnacle of the geographical edifice, from which we can gain a view of the *geographical course of history and the national character*.

In the ages preceding the beginning of the historical epoch the whole of our country, excepting the south-west, was, as is known, covered with a sheath of ice; the area free from ice, thanks doubtless to the drying effect of the icy covering on the winds that passed over it, had the advantage of a dry climate and prairie conditions. As the ice retreated northward there migrated into our area from the south-east and north-west animals of the Steppe, and with them also the man of the wilderness, the shepherd. Further migration to the north was at that time hindered by the waters of the melting ice-layer, which accumulated in the region of the Great Valleys. Gradually, as they drained away, this marshy area became covered with forests; man began to penetrate into these forests as now in the Siberian "taigas" by means of the rivers, finding means of subsistence in fishing and hunting, and in the course of time in agriculture too, while the woods and swamps gave him protection against his enemies. This region, after the migration of the German tribes westward, eventually became a focus of the Slavs, from which they gradually moved out in various directions and split up into various nationalities—Polish on the west, Ruthenian on the east. Beside them the

Lithuanians had long been living under the protection of the forests. This forest area included Lakeland also.

But beyond, in the north, there grew up on the coast of the Baltic out of the river deltas another unwooded zone corresponding to the southern prairie zone, which was more favourable to the spread of civilization. Here the seafaring Norse folk settled. Amber, which was greatly prized as an ornament in the Mediterranean south, was to be found there. It became a commercial attraction to the sea rovers, as in other places spices, ivory, precious stones, and so forth. Consequently, throughout our land trade relations between north and south were set on foot by two main routes—one westward from the Moravian Gate, by which Roman merchants made their way, the other from the Black Sea, by which the Greek merchants journeyed from their colonies. The tribes bordering on the Baltic, the Norse men, seafaring and warlike, eager for prey, pushed up the rivers to the south. It was no doubt at their prompting that there arose among forest tribes round rivers and lakes the first national organizations, centres of political crystallization. On the west, in the valley of the Warta with Lake Goplo, there arose the Lech or Polish Kingdom; on the east, in the valley of the Vilia, with Lake Trotski, the Lithuanian; and still farther to the north-east, on the River Volkhov and Lake Ilmen, the Ruthenian State, which gradually expanded along the Dnieper, and transferred its centre of

gravity to the basin of the middle course of that river. The first of these kingdoms extended its dominion over the West European quadrangle of our region, the others over the East European one. The first came under the influence of Roman civilization, the rest under Byzantine, and gradually the two achieved a union, forming the Polish-Lithuanian realm.

In the meantime the most easterly branch of the Ruthenian Slavs, in obstinate struggles with the Asiatic barbarians, whose last waves flowed even to our region, set up the separate State of Moscow, while in the west of our region recoiling German waves began to set eastward and the *Drang nach Osten* began. In this fashion the Polish Kingdom became the medium between Western European Germanic influence, trending eastward, and Eastern European, Tartar, and Muscovite influence, trending westward. In the beginning this pressure from the west found vent chiefly along the shores of the Baltic, the eastern tendency along the Steppe zone; but in the course of time, in proportion as the powers of political organization grew in the east and west, these factors of pressure extended along the whole line of the Polish "pass," western and eastern, until finally it succumbed under their onslaught (partition of Poland). Even to-day this occupied passage is a powerful link between them, in spite of all noisy neo-Slavonic and anti-Germanic outcries. The Polish people which made its home in the western, and in respect of civilization older,

portions of our transitional region became its representative people. The Poles became the anthropogeographical, and particularly the geographical-historical, expression of the conditions in which they lived, the executors of their exigencies, and finally the victims of their geographical inconveniences. The Poles, settled on the gangway between the west and east of Europe, became geographically selected as the middlemen of civilization; geographical conditions imposed on them the task of receiving the civilization of the West and passing it on to the East. But this task the Poles managed to perform only in part, and then fell into erring ways, because the same geographical conditions made them the bulwark of civilized Christian Europe against the incursions from the south-east of the Moslem barbarians of Asia. Constant conflicts with the unbelievers evolved in the Poles, Catholics as they were, fundamental qualities recalling the Spaniards: chivalry, ambition, and religiousness; wars with the "infidels" were wars of "the Lord"—i.e. of God—and the warriors bore the name of "the faithful." Religion brought about their docility to Rome, then intolerance, due to the preponderance of the clerical class, and chivalry, the preponderance of the warrior class or nobility, and contempt for other classes, even when "they captured cannon with hands black from the plough." Ambition engendered pride, which for its personal gratification did not hesitate to sacrifice the good of the

country (Targowica). Such conditions had a prejudicial effect on the nation's intellectual development. Constant struggles and disorders must needs, partly directly, partly indirectly, through the development of clericalism, militate against the development of thought as the basis of an independent spiritual evolution; and although direct contact with the cultured peoples of the west allowed them to take in culture from without, yet this assimilation, owing to small mental development, could not but be more or less superficial and often subject to retrograde action.

Finally, a life full of war's alarms has much the same results as in volcanic districts: a certain carelessness of the morrow, a hand-to-mouth existence, frivolity, disinclination for systematic work. "The Poles," declared Napoleon, "do everything from enthusiasm, and nothing by system."

Such a national character, the outcome of geographic conditions, was still more harmful, in face of the lack of strategic frontiers, especially to the west and east. It became necessary to fight on two fronts; but that was not all, for strong natural frontiers on north and south were not for the most part, with the exception of the Carpathians, genuine political, but rather merely potential frontiers. The Poles, as an agricultural inland nation, had no great inclination for the sea. "The Pole may be permitted to ignore the sea as long as he is hard at ploughing." The seacoasts became centres of foreign power; to reach those seas, in

reality very distant, it was necessary to overcome unheard-of difficulties and contend on the north with the warlike Pomeranians and Prussians, who found refuge in marshes and lakes where Polish malcontents also sheltered (Maslaw, Zbigniew); on the south with the warlike hordes of Turks and Tartars, who appeared like a flash and were gone in the limitless Steppes. The Poles were not numerous enough, and still more not sufficiently organized, to carry on a battle on all fronts. They therefore sought outside help—on the north by calling in the Teutonic Knights, who planted themselves on the Lower Vistula, and on the south by organizing the Cossacks, who took root on the Lower Dnieper. As a result of this help there arose for the Poles two *regna in regno*: the allies became enemies, with whom in turn they had to fight grievous battles. These arduous struggles exhausted the strength of the Poles and brought them to downfall, despite the astonishing valour which had been evolved in warfare. The heroic exploits of the Poles in defence of their lost country were watched, not only in their native fields but in the long run by the eyes of almost the whole world. Poles fought in the land of Washington and among the pyramids of sultry Egypt, on the snowy summits of the Alps and on the rocky slopes of Samosierre, in the gay fields of Italy and between the flaming towers of Moscow, on the crackling ice of the Bere-sina and in the murderous glow of San Domingo, in the suburbs of Leipzig and on the ill-fated fields

of Waterloo, where the God of Wellington "brought night and the Prussians," in order to usher in the longer night of the Holy Alliance, the shadow of which falls even on our own days. All those efforts were in vain because the constant unrest produced egoism and cowardice, besides self-sacrifice and valour.

To the above consequences of transitionality, which necessitated ceaseless struggles and exposed it to heavy historic blows, we add the following, that Poland, owing to this very transitionality, is without great natural resources which would give it such material power as falls to many countries of Western Europe; that it is also devoid, save for certain surroundings of the frontier mountains, of exceptionally beautiful features—at least, such as that Alpine country, where, under the lee of the rocks and a crown of woods, stands, full of quiet and colours, the Chapel of Tell, or such as "the land where the citron blooms, and the gold of the oranges gilds the spring-time trees," or as that "whose rocky cliffs are washed by the sea and Olympus crowns the brows." Neither does it possess those beauties, ever attractive, which can profitably be shown to tourists from the whole world. Such beauties we can only succeed in creating in our soul by representing to ourselves an ordinary meadow as the "fairest plain in the world, where the nymphs in spring and summer sow the grass, and sprinkle it with a scarlet flower." Only when we take all this

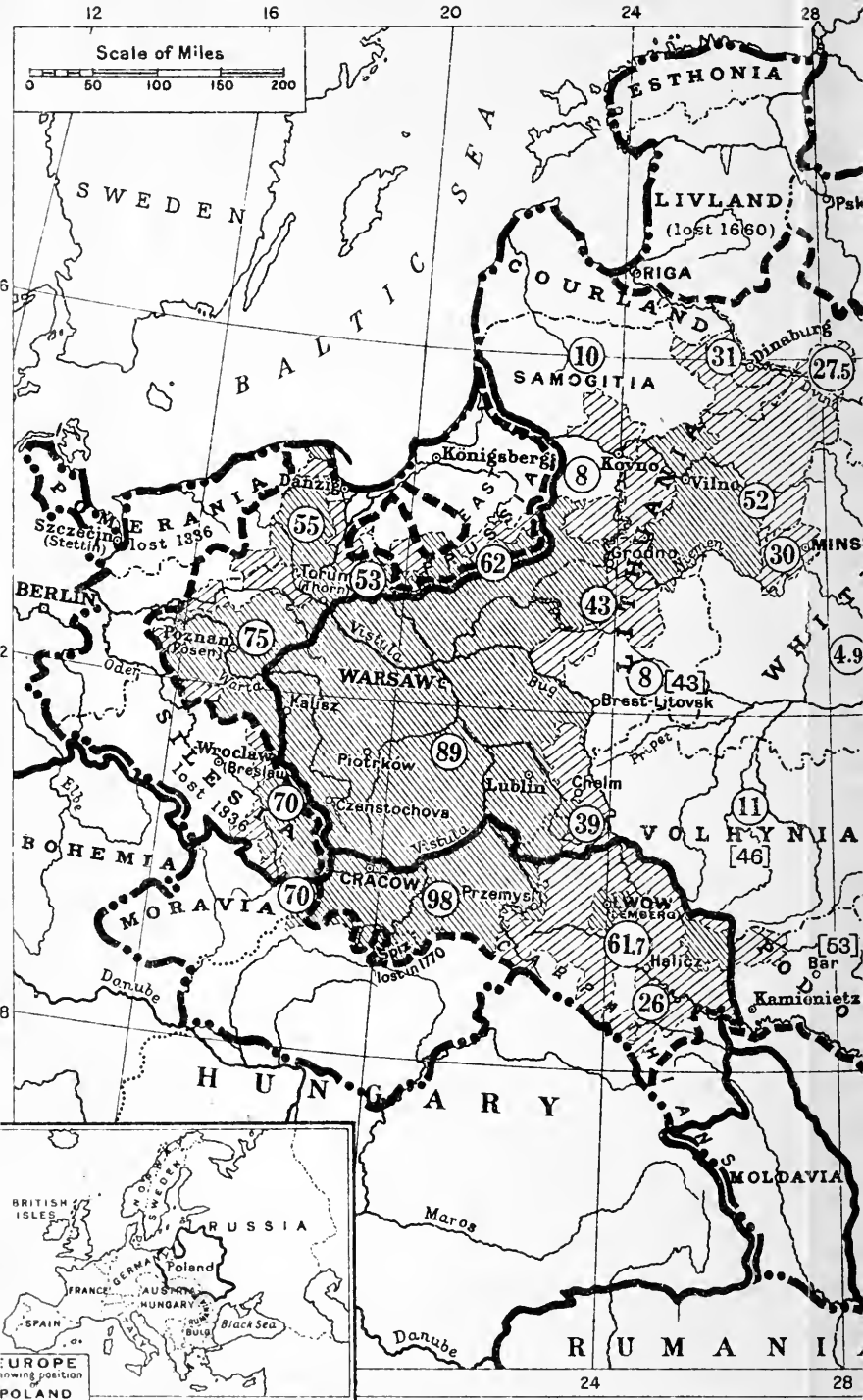
into consideration, can we understand the attachment of the Pole to his country, why his tenderness for the Fatherland bears such a disinterested, idealistic, nay, mystic, character.¹ We understand why it has attained to such hypertrophy, and hence, instead of arousing energy, active clinging to the future, it evokes only too often sadness, indifference, and dreaming immersion in memories of the past. It finds expression in the most varied manifestations of our life and activity.

But patriotism of the past, resigned, sad, and dreamy, is neither practically salutary nor theoretically the only possible outcome of transitionality. And such a negative habit of mind is not the sole result of these geographical influences on Poland. They have a positive result as well. Here is a clue to the habit of mind engendered by this positive influence, which was already known to a certain writer of the sixteenth century who taught and urged on his people in the following manner: "*While other nations are defended by water, have embattled gateways, impassable mountains, we have nothing of the kind. . . . From all sides the plains and ways to Poland are open and broad to the enemy: advances, retreats, entrances, exits; he gets victuals and prisoners where he pleases and how he pleases. In our hands only, in our breasts and throats only, is our armoury—these are our mountains, our waters,*

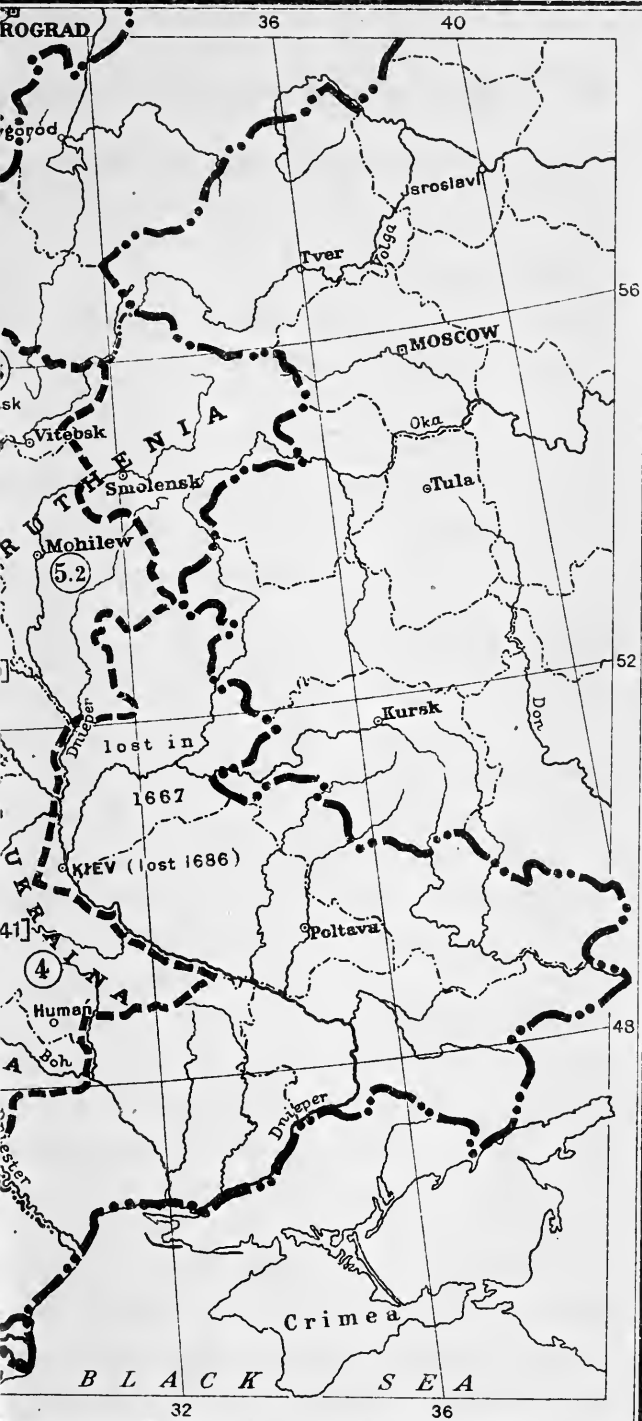
¹ We are speaking, naturally, of sincere feeling, not of that which is simply simulated.

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ETHNOGRAPHICAL
AND
HISTORICAL MAP
OF
POLAND



- Boundaries of the Polish State
- Poland at the time of the First Partition (1772)
- Present International Boundaries



Polish Population 51—100%.

" " 20—50%.

Figures in circles indicate the actual percentage.

Figures in brackets indicate percentage of Polish land ownership

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these the castles, walls, and ramparts of Poland."¹ To-day this picture remains unaltered; we need only modernize its details to bring it up to date.

But these new values will not be furnished by those social strata that have already played their part in history; the laws of economic development drive those classes ever more into the arms of reaction, towards degrading union with all that against which they one time so manfully fought. They drive out from among themselves the best individuals, those of the future; they become alloyed with baser elements; they look enviously at the past and with alarm at the future. The torch of history falls from their hands and goes out. But that torch is picked up and borne forward by other classes, awaking to-day in fierce passion to historical life.

¹ Vide Piotr Grabowski, *O pięciu rzeczach Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* ("Of the Five Attributes of the Polish Republic").

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